(c) and (d) State Governments have been requested to set up State and District level Water and Sanitation Missions so that the desired thrust is made available for an integrated implementation of institutionalising community participation under Rural Water Supply Programme and Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) under the Central Rural Sanitation Programme. It is envisaged that their functions would include receipt of funds released by the Central Government and its effective utilisation/disbursement for various activities related to awareness campaigns, training programmes and physical implementation of the schemes opted by the community. They are also expected to provide effective monitoring, supervision and guidance in the implementation of the reform projects.

Plan to connect villages by roads

741. SHRI SATISHCHANDRA SITARAM PRADHAN: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have a plan to connect all villages by roads;

(b) if so, the details of that plan;

(c) whether there is any plan to reform the present National Village Roads Development Committee; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI SUBHASH MAHARIA): (a) The President's Address to the joint sitting of Parliament in October, 1999 indicated among other things, that a Programme for Rural Connectivity through construction of all weather roads to connect all villages would soon be started. The Ministry of Rural Development has been assigned the task of effecting 100 percent connectivity to the rural areas.

(b) to (d) The contours of the Programme for Rural Connectivity are in the preliminary stages of formulation, to enable the activities to commence in the financial year 2000-2001. A National Rural Road Development Committee (NRRDC) under the Chairmanship of Shri. Nitin Gadkari has been set up by the Ministry of Rural Development. This Committee is in the process of finalising its report.

Role of MPs in D.R.D.A.

† 742. SHRI RAGHAVJI: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(a) whether Government have since taken a decision to the effect that D.R.D.A. be presided over by the local Members of Parliament;

(b) if so, the details thereof and since when it is likely to be implemented;

(c) what will be the status of the Members of Rajya Sabha in D.R.D.A. and whether they will also be appointed as Chairman; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI SUNDER LAL PATWA): (a) to (d) The question of affording an enhanced role to local Members of Parliament in the functioning of the District Rural Development Agencies (D.R.D.As) is under active consideration.

Improving the Condition of Rural Poor

743. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have studied the contents of the newsitem titled "Remove urban bias in planning process" appearing in The Hindustan Times, dated 9th February, 2000.

(b) whether the Indian Rural Development Report 1999 points out that while 70 per cent people live in rural areas, the total allocation for the rural development is only 12 per cent and a number of rural laws are to be scrapped to give the poor a level playing field;

(c) if so, what sincere efforts are being made by Government in this regard; and

(d) by when the condition of the rural poor would improve?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI SUNDER LAL PATWA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) and (d) Government have been according high priority to rural development and the allocations to this sector have been stepped up substantially, over the years, for undertaking programmes for the benefit of the rural poor. The major programmes of rural development have been restructured from the current financial year to give more focussed attention to the target beneficiaries. Particular emphasis is being laid on rural connectivity, rural water supply and rural housing.